'Firefighters will be put in impossible position'

From page 1

Dobson said in the document: "We are also considering the introduction of a pilot project in which three of our Mini Cooper initial response vehicles would be located in the Borough of Camden and the City of Westminster and would be the first vehicle to respond to a call from an automatic fire alarm."

The plans will now have to be voted on by the 17 politicians on the London Fire Authority, which includes Camden Council leader Sarah Hayward, and could be rolled out across London if trials prove successful.

Mr Embery, the Fire Brigades Union's regional secretary, said the use of under-equipped vehicles would put firefighters in the impossible position of deciding to put their lives at risk by "cutting corners" and tackling a blaze without the

equipment, or "hanging around on the pavement" watching a fire develop.

He said: "We are instinctively dubious about it, because our view is that the Fire Brigade needs to be equipped by proper fire appliances, with the proper range of equipment.

He said: "In the nottoo-distant future we could find ourselves with fewer fire engines and more and more Minis. That then becomes really dangerous."

Doubt was also cast on the plans by London Assembly member Murad Qureshi, who said: "While a Mini may well get to an incident quicker - just like they did in The Italian Job - I can't imagine how the Minis can carry the same amount of kit that a fire engine does, nor numbers of firefighters and give Londoners the reassurance that once it arrives it's got what's needed for the job."

In the famous Michael Caine film, drivers trying to escape with gold bullion drive Mini Coopers down steps and through tunnels as part of an elaborate getaway in

A spokesman for the London Fire Brigade said: ^aWe used five Mini Coopers successfully during the Olympics to deal with small incidents on the Olympic Park. We're now looking at how the cars could be used in the future and plans for a pilot project are being looked at. As part of the pilot, three of the cars could be located in Camden and Westminster to act as first response vehicles to calls from automatic fire alarms.'

from the Highgate

unused.

hospital for more than a

forgotten sketch of Dick

decade and it was left

He recreated his

Whittington's trusty

sidekick - an image he

described as "a slightly

mad-looking cat" - for the

New Journal this week in celebration of a decision

by Whittington bosses to

people which was

Hospital Coalition

(DWHC) and this

newspaper in March.

famously illustrated

works by Roald Dahl

including Charlie and the

Chocolate Factory, said:

"Hurrah, it's a celebration.

Mr Blake, 80, who

volunteers from

organised alongside

Defend the Whittington

• Camden firefighters in "smart dress uniform" will march against the cuts today (Thursday) supported by a pipe and drum band. It leaves at 11.30am from The Monument in the City of London, to the London Fire Brigade HQ in Union Street for a rally

Blake recreates Whittington's forgotten sketch by WILLIAM McLENNAN Quentin Blake at the AS one of the country's **Gross Street** best-known illustrators, Gallery with loved by children across his new the world, it might not be version of the a surprise that bosses at sketch, below the Whittington seemed delighted when Quentin Blake offered to sketch his own version of their famous cat logo. But the artist has revealed that after he sent them the sketch in his own unmistakable style. he heard nothing more

Welcome return of Quentin's cat

scrap plans to cut hundreds of jobs and sell off millions of pounds of publicly owned buildings. Last week the hospital's controversial 'estates strategy" which was only brought to public attention in a New Journal exclusive in January - was abandoned. It followed a march by an estimated 5,000

> You've done it. It's great to see these things actually have an effect."

Speaking at the launch of an exhibition at the Cross Street Gallery in Islington, he said the whereabouts of his original sketch remained a mystery and he did not

know why it had not been used by the hospital.

"They approached me," Mr Blake said. "I said 'yeah, I'll do that' and I'd actually been drawing some cats at the time, it must have been 10 years ago, so I adapted one into a black cat and I never quite understood what happened. The person I was communicating with said 'we are going to use it for the so-and-so and so-and-so, and later on they

were going to use it for the hospital' - but I don't know what happened."

Mr Blake has provided a series of pieces of art for hospitals and mental health hospitals across the country that hang on ward walls and reception areas.

Taking a break between signing autographs, Mr Blake sketched what the missing print looks like to publish here.

He said: "I can't remember exactly what it was like, but it had sort of mad eyes. Something like that as I remember it, it

may not be accurate."
The hospital was unable to comment on the location of Blake's original design, but now said: "We love the drawing and have written to him with our intentions to use it on fundraising merchandise. We're also hoping to feature it prominently in the hospital.

 The Whittington has unveiled its new five-year clinical strategy following a three-month "listening exercise". See Health, page 21.



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